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BOOK NOTICES.

Quelques Mots sur la politesse chinoise. Par le P. Simon Kiong.

S.J. Avec appendices sur les fourrures et soieries par le P. F. Courtois, S.J.
Variétés sinologiques, No. 25. Shanghai, Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique,
1906, 120 p.

A Chinese proverb says, "In entering a country, inquire for what is forbidden; in entering a village, inquire what is customary there." This sentence might well stand as a motto for this book. Intended, above all, for practical purposes, to serve the needs of Europeans who have dealings with the Chinese, it initiates the reader into the whole intricate system of Chinese social intercourse, politeness, official costume, and visits, salutations to be made, the reception-room, the use of palanquins and horses—in short, it is a handbook which teaches what constitutes good behaviour and *savoir vivre* in a Chinese gentleman, and thus in it are reflected many sides of Chinese customs and manners. The rules of propriety have always been a science in themselves, to the exposition of which one of the ancient classical books, the "Li ki," is entirely devoted—a science without the knowledge of which no Chinaman can properly live, and indispensable, also, to every foreigner who desires to make for success in China either in business or politics. Many foreigners living or travelling in China have no idea how many hundred times they inadvertently and unconsciously hurt the feelings of the people and ruin their own success by little words, actions, or omissions. A foreign consul, a newcomer, who was just paying his first visit to the Viceroy Chang Chih-tung, in his well-meant efforts to tell him all sorts of agreeable things, finally turned to his interpreter with the remark that he had seen Li Hung-chang on his visit to Europe, ejaculating the name of the old diplomat in a somewhat loud voice, whereupon the zealous interpreter translated his remark literally into Chinese. The Viceroy turned away, completely disgusted, and the whole friendly visit proved a failure. The consul, without knowing it, had violated several fundamental rules of propriety. In the first place, the names of people should not be called out in a loud voice on an official visit; and, secondly, the names of exalted and deceased personages should not be pronounced at all, but only hinted at; at all events, the name of the then living person is now not valid at all, but to be supplanted by its posthumous title. No educated Chinese, except when conversing in English to foreigners, would dare to speak of Li Hung-chang. Such examples could be told by scores, not to mention those which, through the careless infringement of popular customs, may result in most serious consequences. Indeed, it is certainly much more the discriminating tact of the foreigner as regards what should be avoided than the strict observance of Chinese etiquette itself, which is the secret to his success; and in whatever capacity, and with whatever aims, a man may set out for China, he should not fail to familiarize himself with what is tactful and *bon ton* in the thoughts of the Chinese. Such a study will always pay, whereas its neglect will reap the consequences. The present publication is a commendable guide-book to this end; and it would be desirable for every foreign Government to lay in a goodly supply of copies for distribution among those members of its consular and diplomatic staff who are to be sent to China, and who should pass an examination on the subject before their departure.

B. L.